

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, January 22, 2008

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3-year-old's death remains a mystery

By SHAUN BYRON
Of The Oakland Press

PONTIAC - Fantasia Reese loved purses, her grandmother's macaroni and cheese, riding her scooter and going to church. The 3-year-old was a "miracle grandbaby" to her paternal grandparents, Earnest and Bobbie Reese. "She was a special little baby," Bobbie said. And her death remains a mystery. Fantasia was taken off life support Jan. 16 after being admitted to the critical care unit of Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital because of injuries she suffered, possibly from child abuse, authorities say.

Pontiac police are continuing to investigate her death as a homicide, although no suspects have officially been named.

Fantasia's grandparents describe her as a happy child, who loved to play and was one of several grandchildren they had hoped to one day take to Disneyland.

She also was given the nickname of Tink by her father, Earnest Reese Jr. of Pontiac.

"I don't know why, but my son started calling her Tink and then everyone else did," Bobbie said. "We still had a lot to do with her, but it was cut short."

The Reeses said their son is too upset about his daughter's death to discuss it and wants to know why anyone would harm a child. "He's really tore up," Bobbie said. Fantasia was in the choir at Bray Temple on Roselawn Street in Pontiac.

She also loved being around her family, especially last year when they had a cookout with extended family members.

Bobbie said she has relatives from Tennessee who had come to Michigan for the gathering, and they got a chance to meet Fantasia for the first time.

"We had a big SpongeBob SquarePants blow-up, and the kids were jumping around and she must have jumped herself half-crazy," Bobbie said. "And she loved snow cones."

Earnest said his granddaughter was a lively little girl who was always smiling and brightened them up whenever she was around.

"She enjoyed life as much as possible, as short of time as it was," he said. "We as grandparents really enjoyed her, too."

"And she loved her daddy," Bobbie added.

Fantasia also is survived by her mother, Sharon Renee Hobson; siblings Marquise Hobson, Kamaree Tucker and Fiona Reese; and grandmother Marilyn Hobson.

A public visitation is scheduled 1-8 p.m. today at Lawrence E. Moon Funeral Home, 268 N. Perry St. in Pontiac.

The funeral services will be at 2 p.m. Wednesday in the funeral home's chapel. Burial will be at Perry Mount Park Cemetery.

The family is asking for help in covering the funeral costs with donations to be made to Lawrence E. Moon Funeral Home.

Contact staff writer Shaun Byron at (248) 745-4685 or shaun.byron@oakpress.com.

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http://www.theoaklandpress.com/stories/012208/loc_20080122197.shtml

01/16/2008

Group keeps babies out of harm's way

Multi-agency workgroup reaches out to parents and caregivers to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome injuries and deaths

By Carol South

Grand Traverse Herald contributing writer

Take a break ... step away.

Advice that can save a life is being spread to young parents and infant caregivers: when babies cry and cannot be comforted, a brief respite can save a life.

After a Shaken Baby Syndrome death in the Kingsley area last February, a multi-agency workgroup formed in April determined to make a difference.

Starting with zero funding, the group has put together Public Service Announcements thanks to the Department of Human Services and conducted training for phone help line counselors at Third Level and public health nurses who work with young families.

The workgroup has also received a Love For Children Memorial grant to cover still ads at the local Horizon Cinema while another grant from the Tri-County Coalition for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect funded rattles printed with the Third Level help line number. These rattles, whose other side reads "Shake this, never a baby," will be given to all moms giving birth at Munson Medical Center during their pre-registration visit.

All the efforts are geared to one mission:

"What will they do when the baby doesn't stop crying?" asks Gary Aschim, a social services program manager with the Grand

Traverse/Leelanau Department of Human Services.

Shaken Baby Syndrome workgroup members want to save babies from crips caregiver, frustrated by incessant crying, grabs the baby and shakes it in a rage. Even a few seconds of shaking can kill or cause permanent damage.

"It causes very significant, very serious injuries," said Irene Stuart, a Child Protective Services investigator. "A broken leg will heal, a broken brain will not."

"I investigate child abuse and neglect and I've grown weary of investigating broken babies," she added sadly.

Meeting monthly, the workgroup pulls in members from an alphabet of agencies: the Grand Traverse County Health Department, Head Start, Early Head Start, the Medical Examiner, the Prosecuting Attorney, the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Department, Munson's Healthy Futures program, the Department of Human Services and the Women's Resource Center's Doula Teen Parent program.

The workgroup's mission is to get the word out about Shaken Baby Syndrome, including the stressors leading up to it and steps to defuse a volatile situation — namely taking a quick break to calm down.

"It's the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back and someone's broken," noted Stuart of the mounting tensions that lead to shaking.

Statistics cited at the most recent workgroup meeting, held Monday morning at the Health Department, show that male caregivers cause 90-95 percent of cases. These young dads are left alone with the baby when the mother returns to work, making the most vulnerable time for Shaken Baby Syndrome to occur is the two- to four-month-old window.

Babies will cry, that's one guarantee, sometimes without ceasing for no discernable reason. If a dad or other caregiver does not yet have the comfort strategies in place that the baby's mom developed, he may lash out.

The workgroup believes their outreach will show another way; their

concise messages are visceral and to the point.

"To walk away is sometimes hard when you're a real young fella and you're used to dealing with things physically," said Shelley Burnes, a client advocate with the Doula Teen Parent Program.

Future plans for spreading the message include getting the information into schools through gym, child development or health classes, television PSAs and billboards.

"Think off the beaten path, non-traditional," encouraged Betsy Hardy, coordinator of Healthy Futures, as meeting attendees brainstormed other ways to share the information.

For more information about the Grand Traverse County Shaken Baby Syndrome workgroup, contact Heide McNichols at 922-2735.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Livingston County man charged in molestation

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

BY ART AISNER

The Ann Arbor News

A Livingston County man who works at a Jackson school and as a local camp counselor has been charged with molesting a then 10-year-old girl while he was baby-sitting her, authorities said.

Thomas Stanley Page, 54, was arraigned Saturday on one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct. The alleged assault occurred in the girl's Ypsilanti Township home four years ago, said Washtenaw County Sheriff's Cmdr. Dave Egeler.

Page, of Gregory, is a counselor at Divine School in Jackson and also works as a counselor for a Onondaga camp.

Egeler said Livingston County authorities are also investigating Page for similar activities, and he will likely face charges there.

Page was acquainted with the girl's family for five years and frequently baby-sat her at the family home, Egeler said.

The investigation began about a month ago after the girl, now 14, told a school counselor in Livonia, where she now lives, Egeler said.

Page remains at the Washtenaw County Jail on \$50,000 cash bond.

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Scholarships support program for foster-care youth

Jan. 18, 2008

KALAMAZOO--The members of one of the nation's most underserved college-age populations will get help making their higher education dreams come true, thanks to a new scholarship and support initiative being launched at Western Michigan University this fall.

WMU's Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative is an effort being launched in coordination with the Michigan Campus Compact and the Michigan Department of Human Services. The pilot program is designed to recruit and offer a support structure and financial aid for young people who have aged out of foster care and who qualify for admission or transfer to WMU. While the intent is to target Michigan's foster care youth, the program is open to qualified students from any state.

The initiative will create a community of scholars among WMU students who grew up in foster care and will attempt to fill the unique support needs that exist for the students who have no adult mentors and no permanent home outside their college residence and who have specialized legal, medical, counseling and financial needs. The goal will be to help foster youth, who age out of care between the ages of 18 and 20, make the transition to adulthood through higher education.

"We cannot, as a society, afford to lose the potential these young people represent," says WMU President John M. Dunn. "At Western Michigan University, we are passionate about insuring that no segment of our society is kept from having access to higher education. This University, with its broad range of programs, excellent faculty and strong support systems is well positioned to make success for these young people a reality."

Michigan Department of Human Services Director Ismael Ahmed applauds WMU's commitment to foster youths.

"Programs like this one are essential to improve outcomes," he said. "The University's leadership is the model for other institutions to provide the support and resources foster youths need to lead productive lives."

Chief among the tools WMU will use to support foster youth is the John Seita Scholarship, named for a three-time WMU alumnus who grew up in foster care and has become one of the nation's foremost experts on and advocates for foster youth. Seita, who has published extensively on the topics of foster care and youth development and whose background includes work with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is being honored this month with the 2007 Ruth Massing Foster Care Alumni Award through Casey Family programs--an offshoot of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Only one foster care alumni a year is selected in the United States.

The Seita Scholarship will provide foster youth aging out of care with undergraduate tuition. Recipients will be required to live on campus, and year-round, on-campus housing will be available, thus providing students with the stability of knowing they have a roof over their heads even during semester breaks.

Seita, now an associate professor of social work at Michigan State University, says people unfamiliar with the plight of former foster youth, often underestimate the importance of housing stability for a student trying to pursue a college degree. Before he became a student at WMU, Seita briefly attended a small Michigan liberal arts college. When his fellow students went home for the holidays, he had no place to go. When college administrators could offer him no assistance, he spent his holiday recess sneaking in and out of a residence hall and scrambling to find a way to eat.

Other tools in WMU's foster care initiative will include:

- adult assistance to young people who need help and encouragement with admissions and financial aid forms;
- a partnership with Kalamazoo Valley Community College to facilitate the transfer of foster youth to WMU;
- a work study component to provide additional life skills and campus connections for students in the program; and
- a marketing drive with state agencies that will publicize the initiative to Michigan middle schools, high schools, foster care agencies and foster parent associations.

In addition, a support network on the campus and in the Kalamazoo community will be constructed and include professionals in the areas of career planning, mentoring, tutoring, counseling and legal services. Support services may also include providing the students with an opportunity to catch up on such life skills as banking, budgeting and time management.

Annually, more than 500 young people age out of Michigan's foster care system. Nationally, the figure is about 20,000. While 70 percent aspire to go to college, only about 20 percent actually enroll and only a quarter of those students go on to earn a degree. That compares to a national college attendance figure for college-age youth of about 67 percent.

In addition to their financial and housing problems, a number of other issues come into play with former foster students. Foster care youth, for instance, frequently lack adult encouragement and role models and often are unfamiliar with college and career options.

"There is a whole set of characteristics and a comfort level that most children acquire through what I call 'family privilege,'" Seita says. "It's something children in traditional families never even think about, but foster kids just never have the opportunity to acquire those traits."

The Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative is an outgrowth of a statewide summit in April 2007 in which WMU joined with representatives from colleges and state agencies to begin assessing the situation and begin post-secondary planning for Michigan's foster care

population. Planning for the WMU program accelerated in the fall of 2007 with the support of WMU's new president, Dunn. A student advisory group made up of current WMU students who formerly lived in foster care is assisting with the planning effort.

First-time freshmen or transfer students who were in foster care or were wards of the state at the time of their high school graduation are eligible to apply for WMU's John Seita Scholarship. Recipients must meet WMU's admission requirements, complete the University's admissions process, fill out a federal financial aid form each year, live on campus and agree to a basic set of conditions that will include maintaining a minimum GPA and taking part in academic support programs such as First Year Experience.

Additional information on how the program will work is available by contacting one of WMU's three principal planners: Penny Bundy, director of admissions, at (269) 387-2000; Mark Delorey, director of financial aid and scholarships, at (269) 387-6037; or Dr. Yvonne Unrau, associate professor of social work, at (269) 387-3185. John Seita, for whom the scholarship is named, can be reached at (269) 501-5487.

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Article published Jan 20, 2008

Teenage boys charged with stealing, crashing car

By Alex Lundberg
STAFF WRITER

Two Novi boys are facing serious charges in the wake of a car theft and highway chase Thursday morning that sent a Livonia woman to the hospital.

The boys, whose names are not being released, are 14 and 16 years old. They're being held at Children's Village in Pontiac after being facing charges in Probate Court in Pontiac for auto theft and obstructing arrest. The older of the two will also face charges of fleeing and eluding, reckless driving and leaving the scene of an accident.

Police report that at about 8:40 a.m., a resident of the Springs Apartments, located on Pontiac Trail, just east of Beck Road, called 911 to report her car had been stolen.

She had started her 1998 Buick Century in the parking lot to allow it to warm up and when she returned to the vehicle a short time later the automobile was gone, she told police.

Officers from the Novi Police Department on routine patrol noticed the stolen vehicle traveling south on Novi Road at 12 Mile Road. The officers tried to stop the car, but it fled eastbound on I-96 to southbound I-275. The vehicle exited on to Seven Mile Road and turned east. Livonia police officers said the car ran a red light at Victor Parkway and hit a Dodge Caravan broadside on the driver's side, sending both cars into the northeast corner of the intersection.

Police reported the driver of the minivan, a 39-year-old Livonia woman, was transported to St. Mary Mercy Hospital with minor injuries.

The 16-year-old does not have a driver's license, police said.

Kelly Murad of the Novi News contributed to this report.



Muskegon Chronicle

Teen sentenced for his role in burning house

Saturday, January 19, 2008

By John S. Hausman

jhausman@muskegonchronicle.com

The last of three Muskegon County teens has been sentenced for starting a fire in a Muskegon home by setting off fireworks indoors, leaving a family homeless and injuring a firefighter.

Muskegon County Circuit Judge William C. Marietti this week ordered a "delayed adult sentence" for Russell James Johnson, who turns 17 Tuesday, of 2464 Holton. That means the judge reserves the right to impose an adult sentence later if Johnson violates probation.

As a condition of the delayed sentencing, Marietti ordered Johnson to be placed in the Muskegon County Juvenile Detention Center for a year, with the last 45 days to be served in the Ottawa County Substance Abuse Treatment Pod. Johnson was placed on probation until his 19th birthday.

Johnson pleaded no contest last month to arson of a dwelling house, a felony. He was charged as an adult. His two co-defendants were sentenced earlier.

The July 10 fire damaged an apartment house at 1152 W. Grand. The fireworks were set off in the lower level of the two-apartment home. A fire official said the teens lit fireworks known as "crackling balls" inside the vacant apartment.

The fire spread to the upstairs apartment, where the tenant was not home. The woman and her family lost all their possessions, and a firefighter suffered an ankle injury while fighting the blaze.

The family of Johnson, whose nickname is "Rusty," last year shared their story with The Chronicle. Family members attributed his role in the arson to his addiction to crack cocaine.

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Michigan runaways' saga ends in Louisiana

Teens in custody awaiting parents

January 22, 2008

BY BEN SCHMITT and GINA DAMRON

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Two love-struck Michigan teens, whose decision to run away in a family minivan has become national news, spent their final private moments together Monday chasing seagulls on a Louisiana beach.

Gage Petherbridge, 15, and his 13-year-old girlfriend, Hannah McConnell, didn't notice at first that they were being watched from a beach ambulance station.

Advertisement

When they did, they hopped into the 1997 white Pontiac Montana that brought them to Louisiana, about 1,320 miles from home, and drove away.

Ambulance workers, who had learned of the missing teens from national news reports, radioed the Cameron Parish Sheriff's Department, who pulled them over around 2:30 p.m. Monday.

They were taken into custody without incident, said Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell.

Around 4:15 p.m., sheriff's deputies knocked on the families' doors in Vienna Township to deliver the good news.

Hannah's mother, Julie McConnell, was preparing to tape an "Inside Edition" TV show about her missing daughter. She had done the national TV circuit all weekend in hopes of finding her daughter.

"We're overjoyed," Julie McConnell told the Free Press. "I don't know the details, but we're told they're safe. I can't tell you how thrilled we are."

On Jan. 12, the boyfriend and girlfriend ran away in Gage's family minivan from their homes in Vienna Township, near Flint.

They also took an Xbox video game, Gage's family cocker spaniel, Mandy, and \$680.

Gage, who has a learner's permit but no driver's license, left a note when he fled saying that he had to be with Hannah.

Gage's stepfather, Duane Wismer, said Monday night he was making arrangements to travel to Louisiana to get his stepson.

"I'm feeling great," Wismer said. "I'll bet we finally get some sleep tonight."

Wismer said the dog is also fine.

Parents had insisted each teen stop contacting each other shortly before they disappeared.

Hannah's mother said her daughter was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and tried to commit suicide in November after her parents told her they didn't want her seeing Gage anymore.

Both families had appeared on "Good Morning America" and other national shows, pleading for their children to return home.

Wismer said he's still unsure whether the parents will let their children see each other once they return.

The teens were found at about 2:20 p.m. Monday on Holly Beach, on the Gulf of Mexico border in the far southwest corner of the state, said Cameron Parish Sheriff's Detective Joey Babineaux.

The couple, he said, had been spotted in the same area Sunday by a resident. Deputies were notified Monday morning and later found Gage and Hannah driving down a highway.

They "just wanted to go to the beach," Babineaux said. "They were disappointed, I think, that they were caught."

Deputies pulled the teens over and took them into custody. Gage and Hannah came willingly.

The teens are being held in separate cells at the sheriff's office under the authority of a district judge until their parents come to get them, which should be in the next two or three days, he said.

The couple told police that they spent Sunday night in Port Arthur, Texas, and had come back to Holly Beach on Monday morning.

Babineaux said the teens didn't say why they were in Louisiana.

While police investigated a tip that they may have been in Nevada and called a friend over the weekend, Pickell said he's now unsure whether they ever traveled to that state.

Contact **BEN SCHMITT** at 313-223-4296 or bcschmitt@freepress.com

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Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Love-struck teens found safe in La. Pair, 13 and 15, spotted after parents' national TV plea

Francis X. Donnelly / The Detroit News

Two love-struck runaways from the Flint area are safe and sound. And so is their dog named Mandy. Gage Petherbridge, 15, and Hannah McConnell, 13, were picked up by police Monday afternoon in southwest Louisiana, said Robert Pickell, Genesee County sheriff.

The teens, who left home Jan. 12 after their parents tried to end the relationship, were spotted by emergency medical technicians as they chased seagulls along a beach on the Gulf of Mexico in Holly Beach, La.

The EMTs, who had seen their faces on network TV shows in the morning, called police, who stopped the couple as they were driving away from the beach.

Their parents said they were relieved the nine-day ordeal was finally over.

"It's awesome," said Gage's stepfather, Duane Wismer. "They're safe and they're not going anywhere. That's all we can ask for."

Hannah's mother, Julie McConnell, said she was feeling a rainbow of emotions.

"Fabulous. Relieved. Happy. All of it," she said.

The night before they were found, the teens slept in their minivan just across the Louisiana border in Texas, police said.

The police and families weren't sure why the teens had traveled to that part of the country.

One possibility, Wismer said, was that they were thinking about going to Mexico. When the teens had exchanged notes and e-mails about running away, Mexico was one of the places Gage mentioned going. Holly Beach is 30 miles east of the Texas border.

The parents said they heard from police the runaways weren't happy that their journey was over.

"When you don't want to be found, you're not happy about being found," McConnell said.

The Cameron Parish Sheriff's Department declined to discuss the case.

The teens will be held in custody by the Louisiana sheriff until their parents show up to take them home.

The families said it would take them a day or two to make arrangements to fly south.

Sheriff Pickell said he wasn't sure whether the youths will face charges. When they ran away from their homes in Clio, just north of Flint, Hannah took \$100 from her mother's purse and Gage took the family minivan and the family dog, a cocker spaniel.

He also left with an Xbox 360 video game, nine pairs of jeans and \$580 he had received for Christmas.

Pickell said he was just glad the teens were found healthy.

"We found Romeo and Juliet in southwest Louisiana, playing along the ocean," he said, in announcing the discovery.

"I think everyone is just glad they're back."

Searching for them was difficult, he said, because they weren't using credit cards or cell phones. Each had their cell phones taken away by their parents because they had called each other so much.

A Michigan friend of Hannah's had told police that she called him Saturday to say she and Gage were low on cash and staying at a Nevada motel.

Pickell said he now believes the information was bogus and is investigating to see whether the Michigan friend lied to police or was misled by Hannah.

For the families, however, all that can be sorted out later. They're just glad to know the runaways are coming home.

"I don't really know what to think," Hannah's sister, Britny Wilson, said moments after getting the good news. "I have so many emotions."

Wismer, Gage's stepfather, said he was so busy with the ordeal that he hadn't had time to retrieve his mail from the last few days.

On his way to the mailbox Monday, he was intercepted by a sheriff's deputy pulling up to his home.

"Are you ready for a road trip?" the deputy asked.

"You got 'em?" Wismer asked.

He said he was so happy that he jumped 3 feet. The discovery of the teens late Monday afternoon capped a whirlwind day for their families as they appeared on "Good Morning America" and "The Early Show."

On each show, they beseeched their children to return home.

"My heart is breaking, Gage," his mother, Mary Wismer, said on "Good Morning America." "I want you to come home. You need to come home."

Hannah's mom reiterated her concern that her daughter suffers from bipolar disorder and had left home without her medicine.

You can reach Francis X. Donnelly at (313) 223-4186 or fdonnelly@detnews.com.

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Parents rejoice as teens in love found

Posted by [Bryn Mickle, Ken Palmer and Elizabeth Shaw | The Flint Journal](#)

January 22, 2008 08:38AM

VIENNA TWP. -- Two runaway teens who drew national attention after they disappeared together more than a week ago were found playing with seagulls on a Louisiana beach near the Texas border Monday afternoon.

Gage Petherbridge, 15, and his girlfriend, Hannah McConnell, 13, were recognized by an ambulance driver in Cameron Parish in southwest Louisiana, who called police, said [Genesee County Sheriff Robert J. Pickell](#).

They were about 20 hours and 1,300 miles away from home.



Gage Petherbridge, 15

Both sets of parents and Gage's sister Alyssia, 11, were driven by limousine before dawn today to Detroit Metropolitan Airport, where they were being flown to Lake Charles, La., courtesy of the television show "Inside Edition."

The program, which airs locally at 7:30 p.m. on WEYI (Channel 25) plans to televise the reunion.

"The McConnell family is flying back tonight but we have to drive our minivan back so we're gonna have a long, long, long trip home," Mary Wismer, Gage's mother, said today.

"But I'm looking forward to the ride back. It'll be a chance to spend some quality time together and really get inside Gage's head and find out what he's thinking, how he feels. I'm sure right now he's still running on adrenaline."



Hannah McConnell, 13

The pair had been missing since Jan. 12 when they disappeared from home with Gage's cocker spaniel, Mandy, and his mom's minivan.

Their parents said the pair are in love and ran away to be together.

But aside from their young ages, there was heightened concern for Hannah, a Carter Middle School eighth-grader who is bipolar and left without her medication.

A nationwide search for the pair ended shortly after an ambulance driver in Holly Beach, La., recognized them about 2:20 p.m. and called police.

The [Cameron Parish Sheriff's Department](#) had been on alert for the pair after a tip came in earlier in the day that the pair had been spotted in the area Sunday afternoon.

After they were seen again on the beach Monday afternoon, Gage and Hannah apparently realized they were being watched and tried to drive away but were caught by a police officer.

They were taken into custody and were being questioned late Monday afternoon.

The teens were low on cash and still had Mandy with them, said Pickell.

"I am totally, absolutely relieved," Julie McConnell, Hannah's mother, said Monday afternoon.

"We were told they were safe and that they weren't going anywhere because the sheriff's department down there had them." We're just waiting to find out how we're going to go about getting them back to Michigan."

Wismer said she's talked with her son several times since then.

"He's called about three times. He's relieved, I think. He misses me. He apologized, too. He hadn't read any papers or seen any news until they were processed at the police department, so they had no idea what all's gone on," said Wismer. "I still don't think they have any idea what we've been through."

They hope to get back to Genesee County in a few days, she said.

"We're really, really grateful for everything the media's done, but at that point I think we're going to need some quiet family time to ourselves," she said. "I just want to get my son home and make sure he's all right."

Their parents likely will be allowed to bring them home Tuesday, said Pickell.

Investigators plan to discuss the situation with prosecutors and probate court officials to decide if the teens will face any charges.

But Pickell doesn't expect that to happen.

"We should leave it as happy to see them back," said Pickell.

Investigators, however, are still trying to figure out if the teens or someone they knew intentionally tried to throw off police this weekend by suggesting the pair were in Nevada.

Police had been trying to trace a phone call that Hannah allegedly made to a Swartz Creek boy claiming that they were in Nevada.

The exact route of their nine-day odyssey was unknown.

The teens stopped in Texas and spent the night in the minivan Sunday before heading into Louisiana, said Pickell.

Holly Beach is about 30 miles east of the Texas border and was destroyed by Hurricane Rita in 2005. Once home to about 300 people, it now has just a few trailers and a couple of rebuilt beach homes accessible only by a two-lane road through a marsh.

Police were still trying to figure out how the pair spent the rest of the week and why they ended up on the Gulf of Mexico, about 20 hours and 1,300 miles from Vienna Township.

"They put a lot of people through a lot of grief," said Pickell.

One of Gage's friends, Robert Magnuson, said the runaways were the talk of Clio High School last week.

Robert, 15, said Gage never gave any hints that he planned to disappear with Hannah.

"Stuff like this can ruin your life," he said.

Hannah's friend, Sarah McGeathy, 13, said she just wanted them to come home safe.

"I miss her," said Sarah.

Their disappearance was featured on national news programs and drew interest from talk show hosts Star Jones and Dr. Phil McGraw.

Hours before they were found, "Inside Edition" was taping a segment with Gage's mother.

In the days after they left, police also had tips the teens may have been headed for Ohio, Nevada or California.

Pickell said he believes the teens knew they were the topic of a widespread search but tried to remain hidden.

The fact that they left with cash and had no credit cards or cell phone made them harder to find, said Pickell.

"Sometimes it's easier to track Osama bin Laden than a 13- or 15-year-old," said Pickell.

Ypsilanti Courier

Man faces several charges after chase

Fleming arraigned last week on felony domestic violence

By Austen Smith
, Editor

What should have been a routine traffic stop during the early hours of Jan. 6 turned into a high speed pursuit of a suspect wanted on felony drug charges, aggravated domestic assault and other charges.

Ypsilanti Township's Steven Fleming, 24, was arraigned on an outstanding warrant for felony domestic violence Jan. 10 in Washtenaw 14 A-1 Court. He was granted a \$10,000 or surety bond and will face a preliminary trial Wednesday.

The felony domestic violence charge is just one of several outstanding warrants Fleming faces in addition to new charges as a result of last week's pursuit. Fleming also will face felony drug charges stemming from a Sept. 2007 traffic stop in which officers found cocaine and ecstasy, and felony weapons charges stemming from a stolen firearm found in Fleming's home. The firearms case originated out of Sumpter Township.

A Van Buren traffic services officer sitting in the highway median observed Fleming slouched against his driver's side door and not wearing his seat belt as he headed eastbound on I-94 just past the Belleville Road exit. Before a traffic stop could be conducted, Fleming accelerated the vehicle leading officers on a pursuit where speeds reached more than 100 mph.

Capt. Greg Laurain with VBT police, said once they broadcast the vehicle description, the driver was quickly identified by state police from the Ypsilanti post. Laurain said at that point, they decided to break off the chase right around Wayne Road and I-94 where the suspect exited the highway.

"He got off on Wayne and we lost him, but then state police picked him again but they eventually broke off their chase too," he said.

Trooper Pascoe from the Ypsilanti Post said they decided to break off the chase because they knew who the suspect was and they knew where he lived.

"Continuing on the high speed pursuit would have been very dangerous," he said. "Since they knew who he was, and for safety reasons, the sergeant at the Mitchell South state police post broke off the chase."

Over the following days, troopers staked out the home of the suspect. On Jan. 9, troopers located the suspect's vehicle in the driveway of the residence and determined that he was inside.

Pascoe said that this strategy doesn't always work, but with this case it

worked out well as Fleming was brought into custody without incident.

Troopers attempted to make Fleming come out of the home but he refused. They eventually entered the home and found Fleming hiding underneath an old bathtub near the rear of the building.

During the troopers' raid on the residence, they observed several illegal items, including the stolen firearm reported out of Sumpter just days earlier and several other weapons, in addition to drug paraphernalia and marijuana seemingly packaged for transport.

Pascoe said all law enforcement involved in the chase and eventual arrest did a really great job.

"This isn't an exact science, but in this case everything went well and we did it the right way because we were able to bring him on our terms," Pascoe said.

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Woman assaulted with baseball bat

POLICE BLOTTER

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

By Ken Palmer

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FLINT - A Flint woman was treated for head injuries early Monday after a man she was living with assaulted her with a metal baseball bat, police reports said.

The woman told police the man struck her on the left side of her head five times at an address on the city's north side.

She received eight staples to close her wounds and was taken to a women's shelter after leaving the hospital, the reports said.

The suspect had not been located.

- Ken Palmer

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Health Care for all

SEEK SIGNERS TO PUT ISSUE ON BALLOT IN NOV.

By Diane Bukowski

Special to The Michigan Citizen

DETROIT — Supporters of universal health care in Michigan have gone to the people, kicking off a state-wide petition drive Jan. 8 in 14 cities for a constitutional amendment making health care a right for every Michigander.

The ballot initiative reads, "The State Legislature shall pass laws to make sure that every Michigan resident has affordable and comprehensive health care coverage through a fair and cost-effective financing system. The Legislature is required to pass a plan that, through public or private measures, controls health care costs and provides for medically necessary preventive, primary, acute and chronic health care needs."

If the coalition, called Health Care for Michigan, succeeds in collecting 475,000 signatures, the initiative will appear on the November ballot, along with candidates for U.S. President and other offices, during a major voter turn-out.

Attorney Gary Benjamin of Michigan Legal Services, who has been fighting for years for universal health care, is part of the campaign along with the AARP's Divided We Fail committee, MichUHCAN, unions, and other organizations. He says universal health care is perfectly feasible in Michigan.

"The Governor's Council of Economic Affairs, which includes representatives of business, labor, and the community, has estimated that \$57 to \$63 billion is spent every year on health care in Michigan by the federal and state governments, Blue Cross, HAP, and the other insurance companies," said Benjamin.

"If you divide that amount by the entire population of the state, we could all have a Blue Cross policy, and still have \$11,000 left over for every resident," he went on. "The Institute of Medicine estimates that at least 40 percent of the health care cost as it stands is wasted on overhead and profit. If we captured even a quarter of that amount, everyone in the state would be insured."

But Benjamin said the amendment does not require any specific solution.

"With the passage of this amendment health care will be a right in Michigan," he noted. "The legislators will be forced to consider the health care finance system and how to reform it to make it fair for all of us."

The initiative is also supported by Gov. Jennifer Granholm and many state representatives, health care policy expert for the Brookings Institute, among others.

More important will be the support of the 1.1 million people in Michigan who are uninsured, and the rest of the state's population, which is facing tough times with joblessness and foreclosures on the rise. The coalition also says that every year, between 50,000 to 100,000 people lose their health insurance because premiums increase and they cannot afford them or their companies drop the care.

Karen McLeod, a housing for the homeless counselor, is one of the working uninsured. Her husband passed last year, after his Medicaid coverage was cut off because they missed a renewal appointment. They battled to get him back in the program, but were continually denied.

"He had high blood pressure and a heart condition, and even after he went into the hospital, he never got Medicaid before he died," she said. "It's the uncertainty of being served that's the worst. You have to be desperately ill. Then there's the horrendous debt afterwards, and they hound you unmercifully trying to get payment. A universal health care plan is long overdue."

Sherry Wells, a self-employed attorney, writer and publisher, and a single mother, said she does not make enough money to afford health insurance either. Her daughter is covered by a state health care program, but neither she nor her ex-husband are as fortunate.

"I haven't had insurance in 14 years," she said. "A good friend just died of colon cancer, and I'm scared to death because I can't afford to get a colonoscopy, even though they're recommended for everyone over 50. It will be three and a half years before I can qualify for Medicare. My ex-husband works for a Ford Motor Company Credit

contractor, and the last time they bid out the work, it went to the bidder who offered no health insurance, no sick leave, nothing. He had to pay the company back for five days he took off when his mother died."

Benjamin said that if the campaign is successful in putting the question on the ballot, there will likely be a major drive from big business to defeat it.

Wendy Block, a spokeswoman for the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, said that while they are still looking at the ballot initiative, they have major concerns.

"We question if it really needs to be put into the Constitution," she said. "There's nothing stopping the state legislature from amending state law. The ballot language is extremely broad, and the meaning of nearly every word could be challenged in court. We also question how universal health care could be funded under the current financing system, with the state in a deficit."

But Benjamin said that petitioners planned to be at the polls during the primary Jan. 15.

For more information, go to www.healthcareformichigan.com, or call Gary Benjamin at 313-590-6136.



— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Dentists honor King by donating their care

Free all-day clinic helps nearly 80 in need of dentistry

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

BY JO COLLINS MATHIS

The Ann Arbor News

Some people spent Martin Luther King Day sleeping late, catching a movie or going to the mall.

For Ann Arbor dentist James Lee, it was a day spent working nearly nonstop for 12 hours for no pay to provide free dental care to about 80 men, women and children.

And it doesn't stop there. Lee gives his staff the next day off, making King Day a two-day money drain.

"The things you get back are worth so much more," Lee said.

Lee, whose practice is at 3157 Packard Road just east of Platt Road, came up with the idea for an annual free dental care day on King Day in 1999, the year after he established his own practice. That's when he realized the best way he could contribute to King's vision was to use the skills he uses every day to help those in need.

Free Dental Day has grown every year since, and office manager Gina Kasprzak said the number of people without dental insurance has increased dramatically over the last two years.

Several hundred people had to be turned down, Kasprzak said, adding: "Our dream would be for everyone to donate this day."

Zakiyyah Ali of Ann Arbor makes sure she has an appointment with Lee every King Day.

"This is a life-saver," Ali said. "I have dental insurance, but the co-pay is so high, it's almost like not having any insurance."

Ali said she has told all her friends about Free Dental Day, as well as her sons, who are too old to be on her insurance plan and don't have dental insurance of their own.

After the first few years, Lee was joined by other local dentists and oral surgeons, and that increased the range and variety of services that could be offered. This year, he was joined by fellow University of Michigan Dental School graduates David Sturtz, Mark Cooks and Mitch Kaplan, a periodontist who saw patients at no charge at his own office.

Lee's office also was staffed with hygienists, dental assistants and office staff. Some patients made appointments for next year as they left.

Hope Dental Clinic, an interdenominational Christian organization in Ypsilanti, also offers general preventive and restorative care to those without dental insurance or the ability to pay for dental care. But because each new patient typically requires eight to 10 visits before getting on a maintenance plan, the clinic can only take on new adult patients twice a year - and only 100 people each of those two times.

"The need is huge," said Dental Clinic coordinator Becky Lewis. "We get in excess of 100 calls a week from adults in need. People are in pain and have nowhere to go."

The clinic increased its volume last year from 2,300 to 3,800 patient visits.

Lewis said that on the last new patient day in November, people spent the cold night outside in cardboard boxes. By the time she got to work in the morning, 175 people were there waiting for the 100 openings.

"It makes you cry," she said.

The Community Dental Center is a nonprofit dental center in Ann Arbor, offering dental service at a reduced fee for low-income Washtenaw County residents.

Director Doris Allen echoes calls to help the needy in the community.

"We get about five phone calls a day from people requiring dental care, but we don't have the funding to take care of all of them," she said.

Jo Mathis can be reached at jmathis@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6849.

Free or reduced dental care: Hope Dental Clinic in Ypsilanti offers general preventive and restorative care to those without dental insurance or the ability to pay. But the clinic can take on new adult patients only twice a year - and only 100 people each of those two times. For information, call 734-480-9575.

- The Community Dental Center is a nonprofit dental center at 406 N. Ashley St. in Ann Arbor, offering dental service at a reduced fee for low-income Washtenaw County residents. For

an appointment, call

734-998-9640.

- The Washtenaw Children's Dental Clinic, located inside Ann Arbor Open at Mack School, is open to low-income and uninsured children under 18 in Washtenaw County. It is open by appointment only; call 734-663-7073.

- University of Michigan Dental School students provide care under faculty supervision for low fees. Appointments and treatment take longer than in a private practice. For information, call 734-763-6933.

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Saginaw County agencies offer free tax help

Posted by [MARY L. LAWRENCE/THE SAGINAW NEWS](#)

January 21, 2008 08:25AM

Several Saginaw County agencies are offering free tax assistance to low-to-middle-income families.

The United Way of Saginaw County kicks off its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance season with a Super Saturday event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Buena Vista Township Community Center, 1940 S. Outer Drive in Buena Vista Township.

Officials offer free tax preparation as well as information to help with finances, credit, housing, senior services, home health services and more.

The Saginaw County Community Action Committee will offer assistance with tax returns from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays starting Monday, Feb. 4, through April at CAC, 2824 Perkins in Saginaw.

"We want to get the word out before Feb. 4," said Lillie L. Williams, CAC executive director. "Some companies are already advertising advance loans in anticipation of tax refunds. These, of course, are fine and legal, but our mission at CAC is for families to receive maximum paybacks for their budgets.

"We want to emphasize that families may reap up to thousands of additional dollars if they take their time by waiting until February to file. We will offer professionally trained volunteers to help them -- free of charge."

In 2007, CAC assisted with tax returns for 1,100 clients who received \$600,000 in combined tax credits to Saginaw County. The United Way's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance efforts resulted in a 38 percent increase in dollars returned to the community. Last year, more than 40 volunteers helped complete 5,250 tax returns for 2,297 clients. That accounted for

\$1,312,797 from federal returns, \$596,810 in earned income tax credits and \$478,123 from state tax refunds to county residents.

Earned income tax credits are for low-income working people and families under legislation Congress approved in 1975. To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain income thresholds and file returns even if they did not earn enough money to require filing.

This year's federal income tax filing due date is Tuesday, April 15. Low-income county residents have had free tax assistance since 1969. The United Way -- the county's largest charity -- and the Saginaw Financial Awareness Coalition will coordinate the volunteer tax preparation sites during the tax season in Saginaw, Saginaw Township, Buena Vista Township and Frankenmuth starting Monday, Jan. 28.

Additionally, a statewide group -- the Michigan League for Human Services based in Lansing -- is encouraging taxpayers who qualify to use free tax preparation services and skip the lure of expensive "rapid refunds."

"Getting all that they are due by using free online services or IRS trained volunteers to do their taxes can make a positive difference in the lives of lower-income families," said Ann Marston, president and CEO of the League.

The 2008 edition of "Money Back in Michigan" available through the League, outlines available tax credits and refunds. The packet is available at www.milhs.org. The Michigan League for Human Services is a nonprofit, nonpartisan statewide policy and advocacy group for low-income citizens.

Meanwhile, the Michigan Statewide Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition, staffed by the League, offers access to the Michigan Poverty Law Program's I-CAN!E-File, a free Web-based e-filing system for taxpayers with household incomes of less than \$50,000.

It's unknown exactly how much in credits and refunds have gone uncollected by Michigan taxpayers in recent years, but a 2002 report indicates Michigan taxpayers left \$400 million unclaimed through the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

Beginning with the 2008 tax filing year, a new tax credit goes into effect in Michigan. It will reward work, supplement low wages and help a segment of the state's population that has not benefited from other recent tax measures. Next year, under the new Michigan Earned Income Tax Credit, all families eligible for the federal credit also will qualify for the new state credit.

Last year, more than 639,000 Michigan families -- about 14 percent of all families -- received the federal earned income credit.

For example, a single mother raising two children, working full-time and earning the minimum wage will receive a state earned income tax credit of \$478. Michigan League for Human Services officials say that will return \$214 million back to Michigan communities

If you qualify for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, these are the documents you will need to have your tax return completed at one of the participating sites:

- Social Security numbers of all dependents.
- W2s for wages.
- Statement from the Department of Human Services.
- Consumer Energy bill.
- Property tax bill or proof of rent paid.
- Landlord's name and address.
- 1099s for interest or other payment receipts.
- 1099R pension income of retirees.
- SSA 1099 for Social Security income.
- Previous year tax return.



Heating help is needed by many

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

By **Monetta L. Harr**

mharr@citpat.com -- 768-4972

If there is ever a time to pony up a buck, now is the time, say people who are brainstorming ways to keep the heat flowing to Jackson-area homes.

Today through Jan. 31, the Community Action Agency will be selling \$1 Heat A Home cards. Money raised will go directly to people who need help paying their utility bills, or bills for fuel delivery.

The working poor, elderly and disabled residents may qualify. In a press release, the agency said families who have never needed assistance before are applying for help because they have lost jobs.

This latest blast of cold weather is a reminder that many are struggling to pay their heating bills, some resorting to the Winter Protection Plan offered by Consumers Energy.

Those enrolled pay 7 percent of what their monthly heating bill would be from November through March. When the protection plan ends March 31, customers must pay their full monthly bills, plus part of what they owe from the winter months.

Consumers spokesman Dan Bishop said customers should call 800-477-5050 well in advance if they anticipate difficulty paying bills.

"I think it will be worse this year because many people are on the program who didn't want to, but they were backed into a corner," said Virginia Fetterman, director of social services at the Jackson Salvation Army. "If they aren't on the plan, their heat gets turned off. It's a catch-22."

Yet there are other means of assistance, along with Heat A Home cards.

Michigan will receive \$27.6 million from the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program contingency fund, according to a release from the office of U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg, R-Tipton. That will help low-income households cope with the anticipated high costs for fuel this winter.

And this month's Consumers bill has a notice about PeopleCare, a program asking customers to donate money toward heating bills. Consumers works with the Michigan Salvation Army in the program that began in 1983.

The solicitation goes out several times a year, but this is when customer awareness is strongest, Bishop said.

Last year, PeopleCare helped nearly 11,000 Michigan families, providing food, shelter, clothing and other emergency aid. Consumers Energy also provided \$1.5 million in energy bill credits and the utility's customers and employees contributed more than \$850,000 for PeopleCare, Bishop said.

Customers can donate \$3 a month or make a one-time donation of \$5 by checking one of the boxes at the top of their January bill. To contribute a larger monthly amount, call 800-477-5050.

Fetterman said clients in the Winter Protection Plan are worried about paying heating bills in April, when she expects agencies will be flooded for cries of help.

"Our goal is to work with customers and agree on a payment schedule that they can meet. Sometimes

there are assistance dollars we may be aware of, either private or public, that can help," Bishop said.

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Bitter cold fills shelters, adds peril for travelers

Monday, January 21, 2008

By Barton Deiters and Nardy Baeza Bickel

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The worst of the cold might be over, but not the snow.

Temperatures are expected to climb almost 20 degrees today, compared to the weekend's single-digit readings.

"I think we're looking at 3 to 5 inches of snow (tonight), which could make travel on Tuesday morning pretty tricky," said Walt Felver Jr., meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Grand Rapids.

He said areas to the north could see more snow.

The low temperatures varied Sunday from 10 below zero in Big Rapids to 2 below zero in Holland and 3 degrees in Grand Rapids, Felver said.

For many, that meant a day inside the house.

For Grand Rapids resident Ronald Phillips, having a roof over his head is a blessing.

"Life is full of choices, and I've made bad ones," said Phillips, 49, one of 165 people who arrive nightly at Mel Trotter Ministries, looking for a safe place to sleep.

"I'm happy there's a roof over my head and there's a place for me to sleep at night."

The number of people seeking shelter continues to grow, said the Rev. Chico Daniels, president and executive director of Mel Trotter.

The downtown shelter has seen the need increase from 130 residents to 160 since the beginning of winter.

About 100 men gathered in one of the shelter's common areas Sunday afternoon to watch football on television.

Others played cards or talked in the halls to keep each other company before heading for dinner.

"We've been doing this for 108 years," Daniels said. "We're not surprised when the weather turns bad. People know they need to be in, out of the cold, and we're a safe haven for them."

The weather created other dangers.

State police Sgt. Benjamin Escalante, of the Rockford post, said crashes, slide-offs and rollovers were the order of the day Sunday, although no deaths or serious injuries were reported locally.

Even the police were not immune -- two state police cruisers were on the receiving end of rear-end crashes that mangled trunks and shattered tail lights.

The first happened before 10 a.m. on Int. 96 near East Beltline Avenue NE, and the other after 4 p.m. on

U.S. 131 near Ann Street NW.

No one was injured in the crashes.

The weather caused no significant delays Sunday at Gerald R. Ford International Airport, but a regional jet heading to Ohio with 53 passengers made an emergency landing about 3 p.m.

The Delta Airways Connection flight reported trouble with its wing flaps about 10 miles away from the airport, leading dispatchers to issue an alert that brought area fire departments to the runway.

The plane landed safely, airport spokesman Bruce Schedlbauer said.

The cause of the flap malfunction is unknown, although the cold weather was a likely suspect.

Send e-mail to the author: bdeiters@grpress.com

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Despite cold, more than 400 blankets distributed

Sunday, January 20, 2008

By Ken Wyatt

For the Citizen Patriot

It was a bitterly cold Saturday morning to be handing out coffee and blankets on a street corner in Jackson - about 13 degrees, wind chill near zero.

Yet some church folks kept their appointment with Jackson's needy in their second annual Cup-of-Joe-and-a-Blanket event.

"One thing I was worried about was how many people would come out in this weather," said Pastor William Scott Sr. of Parma's Calvary Apostolic Church.

"But it's not about us, it's about Jesus," he added as a reporter struggled to take down the words with pens rendered useless by the freezing cold.

Scott needn't have worried. He and 20 or so church members distributed more than 400 blankets between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. in a parking lot across from the Jackson Interfaith Shelter, 414 S. Blackstone St. It was a step forward from last year, when the group handed out more than 110 blankets.

A steady stream of people signed in at a line of tables stacked with dozens of blankets.

A nearby van stood at the ready, its interior stuffed with more blankets, in case the supply was exhausted. At one point, three kerosene heaters were on hand to keep frostbite at bay.

Blankets came largely from two sources -- Jackson's Goodwill Industries, which served as a drop-off point for nearly 200 of the coverings; and Battle Creek's Brookdale Senior Living facility, which donated 200 blankets to one of the church members who works there. Other donations came from various sources, including about 15 knitted hats and scarves from Bennett Elementary School, where another church member, Steve Crocker, works as a janitor.

As people passed through the distribution line, they were treated not to the proverbial Christian "cup of cold water," but to cups of steaming-hot "joe."

And it wasn't just any coffee, but a top Guatemalan blend, Casi Cielo, prepared and donated by the Starbucks on West Avenue, whose manager, Kim McNew, was on the scene.

It wasn't easy to distinguish between ministers and the ministered-to, for some of those who picked up blankets remained to chat with the church people. Others took blankets to the nearby shelter, where they shared tidbits of circumstances that had brought them to Saturday's giveaway.

Carolyn Martin and Crystal Platt, two young women, said they have been in the shelter for several weeks. Crystal has a 10-month-old daughter.

Carolyn said, "I think it's cool that they (the church people) actually give back to the community. Not that many do."

Both women are taking coursework in massage therapy at Baker College.

Wayne Jeffrey lives downtown at the Adams Hotel, has no job and subsists on federal Supplemental Security Income.

"I come here (to the shelter) to eat meals," he said.

Though he had heard the wind chill was minus 4 degrees, an hour later he was still conversing with the church folks across the street.

As the event neared an end, the pastor pronounced it "very successful." The evidence was a nearly empty table of remaining blankets, which were to be handed over to the shelter.

The pastor's son and associate, Shannon, offered a closing bit of philosophy: "The definition of ministry is someone who is attendant to the needs of others."

By that definition, there was a good deal more than "joe" and blankets being given away Saturday.

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Michigan Report

January 18, 2008

EXTENDED WELFARE CASES SHOW FIRST DECLINE

For the first time since the cases were reported separately, extended Family Independence Program cases showed a drop from the month prior.

The cases, where families receive a \$10 monthly stipend, daycare and Medicaid to keep them eligible for job assistance programs, fell to 6,152 in December from 6,290 in November and 6,258 in October, according to a [report](#) from the Department of Human Services. Those cases had first been called out in March 2007 and have grown since.

Regular assistance cases fell again in December to 74,666 from 75,351 in November and 77,391 in October. The regular FIP caseload has been falling since spring 2007.

The Food Assistance Program broke another record in December with 575,711 cases, up from 572,769 cases in November and 570,276 cases in October.

Childcare assistance grew again in December after wavering the past few months. There were 55,081 cases last month, up from 53,748 in November, 55,158 in October and 54,279 in September

www.michigan.gov
(To Print: use your browser's print function)

Release Date: January 18, 2008

Last Update: January 22, 2008

Contact: Maureen Sorbet 517-373-7394

Agency: Human Services

Michigan Department of Human Services Summarily Suspends the Group Child Care Home License, #DG720261613, of Jeanne Dietrich

January 18, 2008

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing (BCAL), issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the license of Roscommon County group child care home provider Jeanne Dietrich, 9233 West Artesia Beach Road, Saint Helen, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child care group home.

The January 17, 2008, complaint investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding child care home family suitability. BCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

Effective 6:00 p.m., January 18, 2008, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Jeanne Dietrich from operating a group child care home at 9233 West Artesia Beach Road, Saint Helen, Michigan, or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept children for care after that date and time. The order also requires Ms. Dietrich to inform all of the parents of children in her care that her license has been suspended and that she can no longer provide child care.

Ms. Dietrich has held a license to operate a group child care home since November 13, 2003. The license was for 12 children.

Michigan law defines a group child care home as a private home in which more than six but not more than 12 minor children are given care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption. Group child care home includes a home that gives care to an unrelated minor child for more than four weeks during a calendar year.

For more information consult the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs

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